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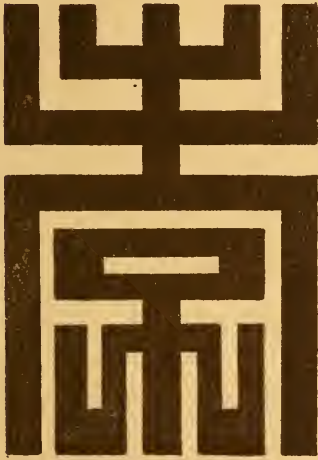
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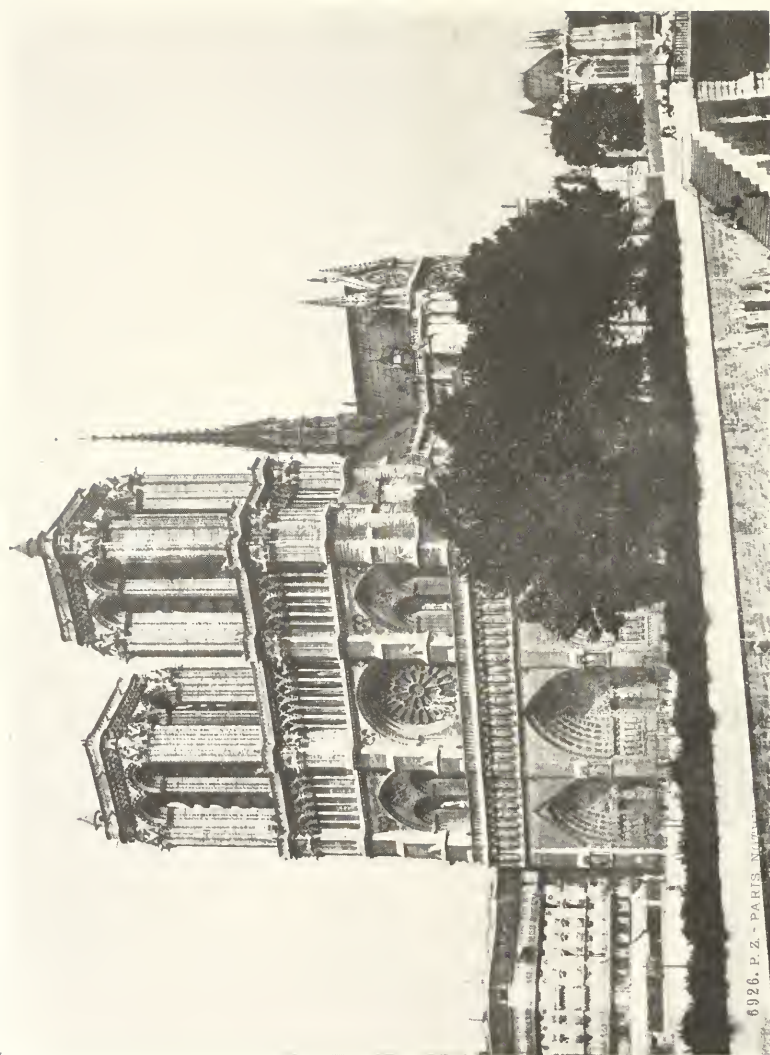
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NOTRE DAME DE PARIS.
The Church where Father Hyacinthe Preached.
Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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FATHER HYACINTHE'S BREACH WITH THE CHURCH.¹

A LETTER TO THE REVEREND FATHER GENERAL OF THE
BAREFOOTED CARMELITES AT ROME.

PARIS, PASSY, September 20, 1869.

MY VERY REV. FATHER:

During the five years of my ministry at Notre Dame de Paris, and in spite of the open attacks and secret accusations of which I have been the object, your esteem and your confidence never for an instant failed me, and I have preserved many testimonies of them written by your own hand and bearing upon my sermons as much as upon myself personally. Whatever happens I shall always hold them in grateful remembrance.

To-day, however, by a sudden change, whose cause I do not seek in your heart but in the intrigues of an all-powerful party at Rome, you bring accusation against what you formerly encouraged, you blame what you approved, and you require me to speak a language or to keep a silence which would no longer be the perfect and loyal expression of my conscience.

I do not hesitate for a moment. I could not step again into the pulpit of Notre Dame with a message falsified by a word of command or mutilated by omissions. I hereby express my regret to the intelligent and courageous archbishop who opened that pulpit to me, and who has retained me in it in spite of the ill-will of the men of whom I was just now speaking. I express my regret to the im-

¹ This article and the following have been translated by Lydia G. Robinson from the memorial number of *Les droits de l'homme*, the reform journal edited by Paul Hyacinthe Loyson.

posing audience that has surrounded me with its attention, its sympathies, and—I was about to say—with its friendship. I would not be worthy either of that audience or of God if I should consent to play such a part before them!

At the same time I am leaving the convent which has been my home, for under the new circumstances in which I am placed it has become a prison to my soul. In taking this measure I am not in any degree faithless to my vows. I promised monastic obedience, but within the limits of the honesty of my conscience and of the dignity of my personality and my ministry. I made the promise under that higher law of justice and of perfect liberty which according to St. James is the proper law of the Christian.

For ten years I have asked of the monastery the most perfect practice of this sacred liberty in a burst of enthusiasm free from all human calculation—I do not dare add free from all the illusion of youth. If to-day I am offered chains in exchange for my sacrifices, it is not only my right but my duty to reject them.

The present hour is a solemn one. The church is passing through one of the most violent, the most obscure and the most decisive crises of its existence on earth. For the first time in three hundred years an ecumenical council has not only been convoked but is declared *necessary* in the very words of the Holy Father. At such a time a preacher of the Gospel—even were he the very last of the race—can not consent to hold his tongue like the “dumb dogs” of Israel, faithless guardians whom the prophet reproaches that “they cannot bark”; *Canes muti, non valentes latrare*.

The saints have never kept silence. I am not one of their number but still I know I am of their race—*filii sanctorum sumus*—and it has always been my ambition to put my steps, my tears, and if need be my blood in the tracks where they have left their own.

Therefore before the Holy Father and before the council I have raised my voice in protest as a Christian and as a priest against those doctrines and those practices which are called Roman but which are not Christian, and which in their constantly bolder and more fatal encroachments are tending to change the constitution of the church, the basis as well as the form of its instruction and even the spirit of its piety. I protest against the impious and senseless divorce which men are striving to bring about between the church, which is our mother in eternity, and the society of the nineteenth century, whose sons we are in time, and towards which we owe our duty as well as our affection. I protest against the still more radical and more appalling opposition to human nature, at-

tacked and offended by these false teachers in its most indestructible and holy aspirations. I protest above all against the sacrilegious perversion of the Gospel of the Son of God himself, both the spirit and the letter of which are equally trodden under foot by the Pharisaism of the new law.

It is my most profound conviction that if France in particular, and the Latin races in general, are led into social, moral and religious anarchy, the chief cause certainly does not lie in Catholicism itself but in the way in which Catholicism has long been understood and practised.

I appeal to the council, which is soon to convene, to seek remedies for the excessive evils of to-day, and to apply them gently but firmly.

But if certain fears (which I fain would not share) should be realized, if the august assembly should have no more liberty in its deliberations than there has been during its preparation, if—in a word—it should be deprived of the essential characteristics of an ecumenical council, I would cry out to God and men and demand that another one should be convened truly in the Holy Spirit, not in any partisan spirit, and should actually represent the church universal, not the silence of some and the oppression of others. “For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt. I utter cries of sorrow, and dismay hath seized me. Is there no balm in Gilcad; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” (Jer. viii.)

And, finally I appeal to thy tribunal, O Lord Jesus! *Ad tuum, Domine Jesu, tribunal appello!* It is in thy presence that I write these lines: it is at thy feet that I sign them, after having reflected much, suffered much, and waited long. I rest in the confidence that if men condemn me upon earth thou wilt approve me in heaven. Whether living or dying this is enough for me.

FR. HYACINTHE.

Superior of the Barefooted Carmelites at
Paris, Assistant Superior of the order
in the Province of Avignon.